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AIKING

CUBA

8 May 1959

John F. Kennedy

1. Delegates from Latin American countries returned from 21st CPSU congress and a side trip to Peiping earlier this year with new tactical plans as well as guidance and offers of training from Chinese Communists.

Latin American parties are to play down subordination to Moscow and develop instead a nationalistic line, stressing "liberation" of their own countries and eliminating from Communist literature all references to "directing role" of USSR.

1. Cuban Communist party was warned that Castro regime may "go to the right" and betray revolution as Nasser recently had.

B. Latin Americans decided to hold "People's Congress" prior to July 1959.

1. By concealing its origin, Communists hope to attract sponsorship of such non-Communist Latin American liberals as former Mexican President Cardenas, former Costa Rican President Figueres, Venezuelan President Betancourt and Cuban Prime Minister Castro.

2. "Anti-imperialist language" to be avoided but Congress is to take an "anti-imperialist" direction.

C. Members of twelve of eighteen Latin American delegations which went to Moscow visited Peiping in late February and early March.

1. Chinese Communists stressed suitability of their tactics for Latin America, strengthening already increasing appeal of Peiping in Latin America.

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2. Advised formation of clandestine parties to parallel established parties in Latin America.
3. Mao Tse-tung stressed that legal and peaceful means should be tried before revolution; however, he expressed approval of the Cuban revolution.
4. Chinese offered to set up in Peiping at own expense four- to six-month course for Latin American leadership cadres, beginning in August, which would stress "practical experience" of Chinese revolution rather than general Communist theory.

II. Generally, Latin Americans minimize the Communist threat and tend to consider the East-West struggle as a contest only between US and USSR.

A. Among liberal leaders who recognize Communist threat are Figueres and Betancourt; Fidel Castro, a new spiritual leader of Latin American democratic and anti-dictator forces, has not opposed cooperation with Communists, naively believing that his program will win greater popular acceptance.

B. Intense nationalism, overwhelming preoccupation with economic and industrial development, and deep-rooted resentment against United States in Latin America create a situation easily exploitable by Communists.

III. In recognition of necessity to alert Latin American leaders to danger of Communism, Fidel Castro was briefed in Spanish on new Communist tactic as it applies to Cuba during his visit to United States.

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- A. Stressing that US appreciates Castro is not pro-Communist, briefing emphasized that Moscow and Peking are attempting to exploit the Cuban revolution to destroy Cuban-American friendship and that the Cuban Communist party has been given mission of keeping Castro's revolution to the left.
- B. Castro's initial reaction to briefing was his usual public stance that he can handle Communists, that US is overly concerned with Communism, and that since the causes of Communism are economic, US should not continue to "neglect" Latin America.
- C. Subsequent frank discussion of specific problems confronting Castro was apparently received seriously and in good faith, providing desired impetus for Castro to start thinking of these problems on his own. Castro's remark that Communists are a "minority" in Cuba was countered by a reminder that his own movement had been a minority, a point which appeared to make strong impression on him. Important points stressed were:
1. Communists can easily exploit a disorganized political situation as exists in Cuba. Castro agreed, stating, "It's true, I've got to get organized."
 2. Cuban Communists are claiming a decisive role in overthrow of Batista and are attempting to use revolution for their own ends.
 3. It is impossible for Castro to identify all Communists in official positions, especially with new concept of a parallel, completely clandestine Communist party. Castro agreed.
 4. Economic and social justice, including agrarian reform, clearly needed in Cuba but must be carried out by true

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5. Communists' acceptance of armed revolution makes armed forces a prime target for infiltration.

IV. Results of briefing were beneficial and encouraging.

- A. Castro, who listened intently and reacted favorably, was eager to accept suggestions that information on international Communism be channelled to him in future.
- B. In order to avoid identifying himself with US officials in this connection, Castro suggested information be channelled through an intermediary. Minister of the Treasury Rufe Lopez Fresquet was agreed upon as Cuban intermediary.
- C. Ambassador Bonsal was chosen by Lopez Fresquet as his opposite number in this matter. (Lopez Fresquet normally carries on official relations with Ambassador.)
- D. Latin American editor of New York Times believes that Castro was convinced of Communist danger while in United States and that he will begin cleaning out Communists when he returns to Cuba. He believes Castro informed his brother Raul of this at their Houston meeting late April and that Castro made his sudden decision to attend inter-American economic conference in Buenos Aires in order avoid identification with any Communist activities at Havana May Day celebration.
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